

- 3 -

**REMARKS**

New claim 17 is added hereby. Thus, claims 1-17 are pending herein.

Favorable consideration of new claim 17 is respectfully requested. New claim 17 recites that the combined concentration of water released from the respective electrodes satisfies the claimed relationships when such water concentration is determined using Karl Fischer's method after sealing the battery or after completion of the assembly of the battery. None of the references applied in the December 11, 2002 Office Action disclose or suggest such water concentrations when determined using Karl Fischer's method in the context of the subject matter recited in claim 17. In Watanabe '644, water content is controlled *before* sealing the battery, as described in Watanabe '644, column 14, lines 37-51. Watanabe '644 contains no description as to the detailed procedure of keeping the moisture at a predetermined level even after sealing, as is clear from the descriptions of the embodiments described therein. In addition, Watanabe '644 does not disclose or suggest results of water content determination at every stage during production, and there is no description in Watanabe '644 as to the method for determining any such water concentration.

In view of the above, it is respectfully submitted that claim 17 is in condition for allowance.

If the Examiner believes that contact with Applicant's attorney would be advantageous toward the disposition of this case, the Examiner is herein requested to call Applicant's attorney at the phone number noted below.

The Commissioner is hereby authorized to charge any additional fees associated with this communication or credit any overpayment to Deposit Account No. 50-1446.

Respectfully submitted,



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Reg. No. 32,402

May 6, 2003

Date

KCB:jms

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